

**FRIEND OF THE COURT ACT (EXCERPT)**  
**Act 294 of 1982**

**552.513 Domestic relations mediation; services; agreement; consent order; confidentiality of communications; minimum qualifications of mediator.**

Sec. 13. (1) The office shall provide, either directly or by contract, domestic relations mediation to assist the parties in settling voluntarily a dispute concerning child custody or parenting time that arises in a friend of the court case. Parties shall not be required to meet with a domestic relations mediator. The service may be provided directly by the office only if such a service is in place on July 1, 1983, if the service is not available from a private source, or if the court can demonstrate that providing the service within the friend of the court office is cost beneficial. Any expansion of existing services provided by the court on July 1, 1983 shall be provided by an individual meeting the domestic relations mediator minimum qualifications listed under subsection (4).

(2) If an agreement is reached by the parties through domestic relations mediation, a consent order incorporating the agreement shall be prepared by an employee of the office who is a member of the state bar of Michigan; under section 22, by a member of the state bar of Michigan; or by the attorney for 1 of the parties. The consent order shall be provided to, and shall be entered by, the court.

(3) Except as provided in subsection (2), a communication between a domestic relations mediator and a party to a domestic relations mediation is confidential. The secrecy of the communication shall be preserved inviolate as a privileged communication. The communication shall not be admitted in evidence in any proceedings. The same protection shall be given to communications between the parties in the presence of the mediator.

(4) A domestic relations mediator who performs mediation under this act shall have all of the following minimum qualifications:

(a) One or more of the following:

(i) A license or a limited license to engage in the practice of psychology under parts 161 and 182 of the public health code, 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.16101 to 333.16349 and 333.18201 to 333.18237, or a master's degree in counseling, social work, or marriage and family counseling; and successful completion of the training program provided by the bureau under section 19(3)(b).

(ii) Not less than 5 years of experience in family counseling, preferably in a setting related to the areas of responsibility of the friend of the court and preferably to reflect the ethnic population to be served, and successful completion of the training program provided by the bureau under section 19(3)(b).

(iii) A graduate degree in a behavioral science and successful completion of a domestic relations mediation training program certified by the bureau with not less than 40 hours of classroom instruction and 250 hours of practical experience working under the direction of a person who has successfully completed a program certified by the bureau.

(iv) Membership in the state bar of Michigan and successful completion of the training program provided by the bureau under section 19(3)(b).

(b) Knowledge of the court system of this state and the procedures used in domestic relations matters.

(c) Knowledge of other resources in the community to which the parties to a domestic relations matter can be referred for assistance.

(d) Knowledge of child development, clinical issues relating to children, the effects of divorce on children, and child custody research.

**History:** 1982, Act 294, Eff. July 1, 1983;—Am. 1996, Act 144, Imd. Eff. Mar. 25, 1996;—Am. 2002, Act 571, Eff. June 1, 2003.

**Popular name:** Friend of the Court